critical digest

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New York Theatre Week

Witness for the Prosecution-Miller 12/16 . Gilbert Miller & Peter Saunders present Agatha Christie new mystery with Francis L Sullivan,Patricia Jessel and Gene Lyons,staged by Robert Lewis...Portrait of a Lady-ANTA 12/21. Producers Theatre and Lyn Austin & Thomas Noyes present William Archibald dramatization of Henry James novel with Jennifer Jones,Robert Flemying,staged by Jose Quintero...What Every Woman Knows-City Center 12/22. Helen Hayes stars in first winter production of NYC Center Theatre season in revival of Barrie classic. John Stix directed cast which includes Betty von Furstenburg,and John Cromwell...Black Eyed Susan-Playhouse 12/23. Gordon Pollock,James Goodman,Everett Hart present new play by A.B. Shiffrin with Vincent Price,Kay Medford.Staged by Gregory Ratoff.

Digests of Current Week Theatre Reviews

The Bad Seed-46th St 12/8. Unanimous raves recorded for Playwrights Company production of Maxwell Anderson's adaption of William March thriller. 9 year old Patty McCormick and Nancy Kelly shared applause with entire company in production staged by Reginald Denham. While there were some minor complaints,all agreed show was theatrically exciting. An extraordinarily literate horror story and a superior bit of theatre, summed up Atkinson,Times. Kerr,Herald Tribune, and Watts,Post,couldn't go along with major premise of play,but did admit its stage excitement. Tense, macabre,frightening study,the first dramatic [illegible] of the season,raved Coleman,Mirror. A well written,well acted shocker,okays McClain,Journal American. Because its premise is so shattering,and its leading roles so beautifully played,it is a moving story,concludes Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun.

High Named Today- De Lys 10/10. Times aisle-sitter only daily reviewer to find merit in David Goodman's new play presented by Nico Productions. He found it odd but interesting. The latter because author is an original writer with something on his mind to say,and the ability to portray vigorous people. His method of deglamourizing of war is done in a style all his own. Art Smith,Dorthy Blackburn and others in cast directed by George Englund were approved. Rest of critics were not as sure as Times man what point author was trying to prove. Every character in show rubbed Kerr,Herald Tribune,the wrong way. Critic fears author's brave folk are as pretentious as his cowardly ones are disagreeable. Dismal and confused earnest sincerity,summed up Coleman,Mirror. McClain,Journal American,wishes someone would tell him what show was trying to prove. Goodman has a good idea,admits Hawkins,WT&S,but his story is told in clumsy fashion. As per usual at De Lys, the stage designer,this time John Blankenchip won top notices.

Move the Critics

NY Drama critics need a change of assignment ,suggests NBC Leon Pearson,Critic at Large. Let them cover sports,the UN,the waterfront,etc. And send the sports-writers,political reporters,etc to cover the theatre now and then. The latter would be less knowing,broadcaster states,but they would feel some of the breath taking suspense public feels when curtain rises. And they would applaud,and laugh,and cry as the public does. Their reviews,he feels,would be a true report of what the public can expect to feel. Then,he concludes,not so many plays would be slaughtered by the cold intelligence of the critics.

Off Broadway

Two special matinee performances of A Doll's House will be presented for students and teachers at reduced rates by Club Theatre, 52 E 78 on Dec 18-19...Young Woodley will be presented by Equity Library Dec 15-19.

William Smithers signed for leading role of The Troublemakers, melodrama by George Bellak due at President Dec 27...Next production of 4th St Theatre by David Ross will be The Three Sisters opening Feb 10 The Dybuk will continue through Jan 2... Marie Andrews replaces Nancy Wickwire in The Way of the World.

Greenwich Mews Theatre has set up a year round Children's Theatre which will open with double bill of A Christmas Carol and A Chanuka Story Dec 27-30. Next program will include Noah's Ark by Countee Cullen.

From Mark Twain to Lynn Riggs offered Fri-to-Sun at Royal Playhouse, 63 E 4, was rated a pleasant mixture of folk ballads and folktales by Jess, Variety. Informal quality of program presented by Folksay Theatre registers effectively. Will Geer as Mark Twain was applauded.

A Doll's House production at Finch Playhouse by Club Theatre is only the shell of the great play, pans Geor, Variety. Lack of cohesion of each actor walking through his own world is something even Ibsen cannot survive.

Twelfth Night receives topnotch treatment at Shakespearewrights production at Jan Hus House, okays Jess, Variety. Cast shared credits with Norman Peck's direction.

West Coast

Pasadena Playhouse January production schedule includes The Prescott Proposals with Judith Evelyn and the Salzbury Marionettes...400th performance of Turnabout Theatre celebrated by having El Brendel and Gilda Gray as guest stars.

Futures

WITNESS FOR PROS	Miller	Dec 16
STARS IN PERSONS	BACKGROUND	Dec 19
PORTRAIT OF LADY	ANTA	Dec 21
WHAT [illegible] KNOWS	City C.	Dec 22
BI[illegible]ED SUSAN	Playhouse	Dec 23
DR[illegible]ERS SHOW	Bijou	Dec 26
SAINT BLEECKER ST		Dec 27
FLOWERING PEACH	Belasco	Dec 28
TROUBLEMAKERS	President	Dec 29
HOUSE OF FLOWERS	Alvin	Dec 30
ANASTASIA		Jan 3
PURPLE DUST	Bijou	Jan 4
TIME OF YOUR LIFE	C.Center	Jan 5
DOCTORS DILEMMA	Phoenix	Jan 11
FESTIVAL		Jan 12
GRAND PRIZE	Lyceum	Jan 13
FOURPOSTER	C.Center	Jan 19
PLAIN & FANCY		Jan 20
SILK STOCKINGS	Imperial	Jan 21
SAMARCAND		Jan 30
DESPERATE HOURS		Jan 26

Theatre Book Comments

"My Life in Show Business" by Ida Adelaide Windisch (Vantage) is billed as a warm-hearted recollection by a small-town girl who married her "daring young man on the flying trapeze" by Down, Variety. Book will appeal to showfolk.

"Best Plays of 1953-54" edited by Louis Kronenberger (Dodd, Mead" is as always, an immeasurably valuable compilation, okays Burr, Playbill.

"Sunset and Evening Star" by Sea O'Casey (Macmillan), the 6th volume in the Irish author's biography completes a masterpiece of writing, cheers Atkinson, Times. Writing has music, eloquence, passion, bitterness and force.

Theatre TV Comments

NBC TV Macbeth with Maurice Evans was generally cheered as first rate theatre TV by NY TV critics, though Gould, Times, critized some production elements.

TUNE WRCA BEN GRAUER 7 30 AM newscast day after opening for quotes of reviews compiled by "C.D."

Green Room Department

HOW TO BE A DIRECTOR...There are fewer good directors than actors out of work, points out Coleman, Mirror, in advising theatre types. Best chance of entering directorial fields is via acting, writing or stage managing, and especially the latter. Once the show opens, the critic adds, the director has just about completed his job. He may drop by every three months or so.

COLUMN TIPS...Josephine Premice fired from House of Flowers because a principal complained of her show-stopping songs, hears Winchell...Silk Stockings angels being asked for more money, reports Farrell...Sascha Guitry will be presented in NY by Milton Shubert, notes Lyons.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...Theatre could use this season a good vehicle for Phil Silvers, suggests Watts, Post...Nancy Kelly in The Bad Seed is the greatest actress to tread the American stage since Helen Hayes first walked on, raves Farrell, WT&S. ...In the long run it is the audience which is responsible for all that goes on-for good or ill- in the theatre, reminds Burr, Playbill.

ON STAGE EATS...Chopped apples is what the on-stage actor usually eats, McClain, Journal American, discovered. They have been established through the years as the food least likely to stick in the throat or otherwise foul up the proceedings. Critic knows at least one actor who after a solid year of apple eating on-stage, now becomes actively ill every time he drives by an orchard. In Mrs. Patterson the "greens" eaten are actual ly a combination of mustard and collard greens.

LIVING ROOM FLOP...Every time a serious, worthwhile, significant play such as The Living Room fails, explains Sheaffer, Eagle, it means that the Broadway managers and investors will be that much more reluctant to send us plays that have something on their minds and are eager to talk about. It means also, he continues, that the playwrights themselves, unless they happen to be pretty stubborn and resillent, are discouraged from attempting anything except fluff...Show was sold out to benefits up to closing night, reports McClain, Journal American...Nathan, Journal American, is sure that there can be no slightest controversy over the fact that it was, in critics view, an ugly play about some ugly people and the the ugliness is not relieved by writing of any beauty.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...Lunatics and Lovers was penned by Sidney Kingsley because he wanted to see such a "naughty, Rabelasian, uninhibited" farce, he told Hawkins, WT&S, prior to Broadway opening. The play started as a satire, but ended as a farce. He explored the subject thoroughly before writing this comedy. Author will report on his research into sex at Dec 20 DRAMA DESK meeting.

Pros & Cons by TMK

The Bad Seed is a perfectly acted and tailored psychological mystery designed to scare the theatre goer for days. An accurate translation of the recent best seller, the production holds the intense interest of audience (most of which on the second night at least had read the novel) No higher tribute to stage-craft on part of all concern can be paid.

8 50 PM is the usual starting time of Broadway shows, be they musicals or plays. The advertised 8 30 and 8 40 curtains mean nothing. New Yorkers have come to realize this and arrive accordingly. While unsuspecting out of town theatre fan arrive at site about 8 PM. A few brave stage-managers could remedy situation quickly by taking curtains up on time. The word would get around fast enough and New Yorkers would start arriving on time.

Actors Fund of America Week has been named by NYC Mayor Wagner as period of Dec 24 through Jan 2. Fund which cares for aged, sick and destitute actors has a current goal of $100,000. Throughout the year special performances are held on Sunday nights for the Actors Fund and at Christmas time the special "[illegible]" appeal is made to theatre audiences at intermission time by theatre workers from all the crafts, critics included.

Plays

Black Eyed Susan shifted opening date back to Dec 23, House of Flowers now scheduled for Dec 30...Ruth and Paul Draper show will be presented for 3 weeks at Bijou starting Dec 26 by Richard Barr and Charles Bowden...The Troublemakers is due at President Dec 27...The Grand Prize will open Jan 13 at Lyceum...Samarcand due in NYC the week of Jan 30...Solid Gold Cadillac had dropped Sunday performances...Tonight for Three will be presented in NY in March.

People

Gladys George died at age 50...Estelle Winwood will replace Enid Markey in title role of Mrs. Patterson, Markey having prior commitment with The Southwest Corner... Thus Viola Roache will take role Winwood was to have taken in What Every Women Knows ...Roddy McDowell added to cast of The Doctor's Dilemma...Charles Trenont was released from Montreal jail on writ of Hello Paris producers when judge declared writ void. ...Mrs. Mary Porter, manager of Empire Theatre, named managing director of Theatre Goers, Inc...Actors Equity to vote Dec 17 on constitution amendments on election procedures.

Other Broadways

Louisville Courier third showtrain headed by critic Boyd Martin 450 members in town this week...Harold Bromley has signed to produce 10 plays this season at Shubert Theatre, Washington.D.C. with funds supplied by operators of house...Two Boston tryouts will try 6 30 and 9 30 Friday and Saturday performances in place of regular matinees, Festival and Southwest Corner...Porgy and Bess company will play this week in Zagreb, Yugoslavia...British Equity voted to try system of "regulated entry" at stock company level.

Theatre Film Notes

"Oklahoma" film version was completed after 107 days of shooting and a total cost near $6 million..."Mister Roberts" will go back before cameras for added sequences...Hal Wallis bought Summer and Smoke.

Theatre Record Notes

Ella Logan and Frank Sinatra signed as voices in cartoon "Finian's Rainbow", sound track of which to be released by Capitol...RCA original cast album future dates include Silk Stockings and Ninotchka.

CRITICAL DIGEST
505 Fifth Ave, NYC

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